

**FACULTY SENATE MEETING #556**

**February 12, 2015**

**12:45 P.M. in BAB 114**

**Present:** *Wai Mok, Charles Hickman, Tim Landry, Eric Fong, Xiaotong Li, Jill Johnson, Pavica Sheldon, Derrick Smith, Joe Taylor, Linda Maier, John Kvach, Carolyn Sanders, Nick Jones, Anne Marie Choup, Eric Seemann, Kyle Knight, R. Michael Banish, Richard Fork, James Swain, Kader Frendi, Babak Shotorban, Ellise Adams, Azita Amiri, Marlana Primeau, Lenora Smith, Udaysankar Nair, Luciano Matzkin, John Shriver, Jeff Weimer, Peter Slater, Letha Etzkorn, Grant Zhang, Lingze Duan, Seyed Sadeghi, Nikolai Pogorelov*

**Absent with proxy:** *Jack Schnell, Joe Conway, Ken Zuo, Monica Beck, Cheryl Emich, Larry Carey, Debra Moriarity*

**Absent without proxy:** *Ying-Cheng Lin, B. Earl Wells, Junpeng Guo, Mark Lin, Kristen Herrin*

**Guests:** *President Robert Altenkirch, Provost Christine Curtis, Al Wilhite*

➤ Faculty Senate President Wai Mok called the meeting to order at 12:45.

➤ Administration Reports

❖ Provost Curtis

**SIE Questions**

The committee has come forward with the first draft. We are working with them to come up with a second draft. We will go through a pilot to make sure it will work on the new online system, and then we will have an open forum for faculty to discuss the questions and see whether the committee has presented something that the faculty is happy with. I will get that to Wai so he can distribute to the Senate. It is a faculty driven process. Every college is represented by a faculty member on the committee. The paper system is no longer supported. We want to make sure that now that we bought the new system, it works before we use it at the end of the semester. The faculty can choose to go with the new set of questions, as presented by the committee and modified by the faculty, or the faculty may choose to go with the existing set. Whatever the faculty chooses, we will do. We don't want to force questions on faculty that aren't what you want to have.

- Letha Etzkorn: The issue with my department wasn't the questions, but was the possibility for people to enter other's stuff.
- Provost Curtis: The new system is supposed to guard against those issues.
- Jill Johnson asked if people can access from mobile devices. Provost Curtis is not sure. Jill Johnson wants to make sure if they can that they know how.

➤ Guest, Al Wilhite, QEP Committee Chair

QEP is part of the SACS reaccreditation process; it is the second part of the process. QEP stands for Quality Enhancement Plan. It is starting now and looking into the future for the next five years. We are supposed to do something that will enhance student learning and/or the environment

supporting student learning. The handbook says these words every few sentences. We want it to be a major enhancement. The process of coming up with the QEP is as important as the product itself. They want widespread input and for us to do self-analysis of data within your university.

The committee was established last May. It consists of people from across the university. A Call for Proposals was put out and anyone could submit to it (two-page suggested Quality Enhancement Plan). We did not find one that fit exactly what we needed, but we found out that a lot of people were concerned about student success. It was also about that time that we started hearing about retention and graduate rates, so our conversations consisted of this over the summer. We sent out a student survey last fall to students who had already left the university. We received about 120 responses. We found out that students leave for a lot of reasons: they move, pregnancy, deployment. There was not anything, though, that jumped out. So rather than get an idea of why students left, we tried to figure out who left (meaning we looked at the characteristics of the students)—we tried to find a pattern in the students that left.

So we took last fall's data of undergraduate students, removed those who graduated in the fall and removed non-degree seeking students. We decided to survey the remaining. Because we had their high school information, we were able to go to other sources of information and get things like quality of high school, etc. We know the number of hours they transferred to UAH (community college, AP credit, etc.). We also have demographic information such as first generation college students. Because we have address and zip code, we were able to get census data and find out information about their neighborhood and poverty level. And since they're at UAH, we know their major, standing, GPA, athletes, etc. There is a natural variation in the data (e.g., not everyone took the ACT, we don't have the name of the high school for all students, etc.) so we cut the data a number of ways to see if results were robust.

We found no differences among the colleges. Males are more likely to leave. Black students and older students are more likely to leave. Athletes are more likely to stay. As total hours increase, students are more likely to stay. Commuters are more likely to leave. As percentage of transfer hours increase, students are more likely to leave. We looked at GPAs in the same way and found similar trends.

- Peter Slater: How are you defining commuter?
- Al Wilhite: Students who don't live on campus.

We looked at students with no transfer hours. Similar to a first-time full-time freshman, but not exactly, since a first-time full-time freshman has a very specific definition. We considered only commuters. Commuters tend to do more poorly. If we consider only commuters in our data, transfer students tend to have lower GPAs. If we look at only on-campus students, as transfer hours go up, GPAs go down.

We only have 1200 students who live on campus, so most of our population is commuters. So we looked at off-campus students (commuters) because they are a huge chunk of our population. They are scattered across all of the colleges. And all colleges have students with transfer students.

We talked to our students. A number of them told us that they think it is critical for them to make connections/friends with other students to be successful at UAH. But this is a challenge for commuter/off-campus students.

### Proposed QEP

Originally, we wanted to connect commuters with each other, but our new consultant said that is too vague of a goal and we need to narrow it down. So we came up with "Collaborative Problem Solving." Problem Solving narrows us down to where we are looking at a particular thing. Collaboration gives us student connections. QEP designed around enhancing collaboration across the university is something we think will help connect the students and also help with SACS. Problem solving spans the university, as well. We have experience teaching collaboration, particularly at the higher levels, but we want to push it down to the lower levels so that it begins earlier.

It goes hand in hand with technology. Modern technology allows you to collaborate sans geography, which is a big help for off-campus students.

When you survey employers, they are looking for three things out of graduates in almost any discipline: communication, problem solving, and working with others.

We want to get students working together through this idea of collaborative problem solving. Where can we do this? We definitely see our students two times: in advising and in the classroom. For off-campus students, that may be it.

Ultimately this means changes in the classroom. As far as the QEP, this means learning environment type objectives, each year a growing number of faculty, staff, student mentors go through a developmental program to introduce collaborative learning, we issue awards for collaborative ideas for student projects that come out of collaboration, using technology for collaboration (for SACS it would be every year we see this technology put into more classrooms). But none of this works unless we have faculty buy-in. So, as faculty members, what is your input? Problems with this? Solutions for those problems? Do you see any push-backs we may have? Things have to happen in the classroom not just because of collaborative problem solving, but because of the QEP.

- Anne Marie Choup: With Collaborative learning, I automatically think of teamwork and group work. Older students hate working with younger students, and some students hate this in general. How do we work around that?
- Al Wilhite: We actually asked this. For us to help retention, we want this happening as soon as they step in the door, in the first classes that they're taking. It is simple interaction, though, not just projects. It can be in-class problems that need solving. It does not have to be a team-project out of class.
- Anne Marie Choup: So you are talking about discussions and participation?
- Al Wilhite: Yes. Simple interactions. But we would like to see this outside of the classroom, in advising. We would like advisors to approach advising as a problem that needs to be solved. So that it is not just a matter of students taking classes, but realizing that certain classes they take will affect next semester's availability and that they want to graduate in four years.
  
- Joe Taylor: Is there any sense, since you said students are transferring credit hours and such, that the emphasis should be put on the community courses where these students are coming versus more GenEd courses?

- Al Wilhite: We are interested in a big group of off-campus students, and they do interact in various places. I asked advisors to identify “gateway courses,” courses that a bunch of transfer students take when they first come here. Those courses would be worth more.
- Nick Jones: Do we have any data about how different groups of students do in collaborative problem solving environments? Or any data about how commuters do in classes with these environments? When I assign collaborative problem solving projects, it involves outside of the classroom meetings. Is there any suggestion that this plan will in fact enfranchise?
- Al Wilhite: There is literature on this. And you have to be careful with this. When you have a lot of commuters, perhaps outside group projects aren’t necessarily the way to accomplish this.
- Derrick Smith: I worked at the Faculty Learning Center at Texas Tech, where we did a lot of collaborative learning in a county 1 with 200+ students. It can be done. Logistically, there is a learning curve on how to do this correctly. What are the resources to train faculty to do this correctly and efficiently?
- Al Wilhite: We have a five-year plan, and it will adjust as we go on.
- Richard Fork: I have a class—410/510: Cooperative Quantum Energy—about asteroid redirection with lasers. The problem with the lasers in asteroid redirections is that everyone is worried about someone else having a laser in space, so what I have done in the class is transformed it into a collaborative form. The students are told they will get graded on cases of how well they bring out the good ideas of other students in class. There are 18 students in the class. Students have to get up in front of the class and present the problem and then choose people to help them. Then they are told that their grade depends on how well they manage the problem as a collaborative problem. They love it. My only problem in ABET because of the lack of documentation and tests.
- Al Wilhite: Documenting and assessing is also the other part of QEP, but it can be done.
- Kader Frendi: What is the future of the program? Are we going to expand it more?
- Al Wilhite: We hope so. In talking with Al Consant on this, he thinks there is a nice role in collaborative activities.
- Kader Frendi: When it happens in the classroom, it gets collaboration going outside of the classroom. It is very beneficial.
- Luciano Matzkin: In sciences, it naturally happens in the labs. I think we could bring it down to the lower classes, as well.
- Al Wilhite: Do you see problems we could run into?
- Letha Etkorn: We have a lot of teamwork classes in Computer Science, but people do not want to teach them because the grades are higher. One student on the team will do the work of everyone, and it’s hard for a professor to detect who is the worker. I have come under fire for this. Do you see any issue with this?
- Al Wilhite: This will happen. It happens in teams.
- Peter Slater: In group projects, students evaluate each other and rank each other.

- Al Wilhite: Remember, teamwork is not the only way to collaborate.
- Wai Mok: We are moving towards distance learning, how do we incorporate this into that?
- Al Wilhite: That is what this is made for, so that we can do collaborative learning via technology.
- Jeff Weimer: I imagine as this is put in place as an administration that you will need feedback and metrics. I think it would be helpful to have faculty put this various information into a resource so you can look at it. How this class does this, and another class does it this way.
- Al Wilhite: I think that is a good idea. So we have it all in a centralized, organized location.
- Jeff Weimer: There is a large body of faculty not here. What about having a brainstorming session for this part of the QEP on Google or Canvas or something.
- Jill Johnson: The university needs to be creating a space where faculty members can get training in different pedagogical approaches—that could be a space for faculty collaboration. Associate it with a place for people to meet for ideas. There is collaboration with teachers and students across courses, but there needs to be support for faculty in doing that. And moreover, there should be some awards for faculty in recognizing their efforts in developing collaborative projects.
- Nick Jones: Did you have data about who was teaching the students who didn't return? In terms of tenure-track faculty or part time instructors?
- Al Wilhite: No, we do not have that data.
- Nick Jones: As tenure-track faculty, we get paid salary, but part-time get paid less, or not a salary. So it is more of a burden for them to go through these trainings and redo their class.
- Al Wilhite: I realize there will be resistance from some individuals, and that is what I want to know about. So how can we go forward? I realize we pay people to do things.
- Al Wilhite: Talk to your faculty. We want input.

➤ Reports

❖ No Senate Officer Reports

❖ Senate Committee Reports

Finance and Resources Committee Chair, Charles Hickman: Distinguished Speaker RFP is out.

➤ Approval of Faculty Senate Meeting #555 Minutes from January 29, 2015

Kader Frendi **motions to accept** Minutes 555. Peter Slater seconds.

Ayes carried motion

No oppositions

*Motion to accept Faculty Senate Minutes 555 **passes***

➤ FSEC Report February 5, 2015

Lingze Duan: The bill was triggered by the recent event of the removal of the Physics Chair. We were cautious to submit the bill so we talked to the Faculty Senate President first. Our intention was not to solve a departmental issue. It was because of the removal of the Chair that we noticed the conflicting wording in the Handbook. We believe that this causes ambiguity and it could affect the

faculty body at large. That is the motivation for this bill. If you look at the bill, it has nothing to do with Physics. We just proposed a resolution. But somehow, if you look at the FSEC Report, it became a domestic issue. At the end, the Executive Committee voted down the bill. But I wanted to clarify our original intention. I am a little concerned that the bill was voted down, because it was too closely tied to the issue, because it does concern the Handbook.

- Eric Fong: Is it in the Executive Committee's purview to vote down a bill?
- Wai Mok: My understanding is if p, then q or r, where p is deemed appropriate, q is the committee, and r is the 2nd reading.
- Charles Hickman: I had not read the by-laws by the time of the meeting, but now that I have, I see that we have three options: 1. Refer it to a committee; 2. Refer it to the Senate; 3. Return it to the originator as in improper form. We did not refer it to a committee and we did not refer it to the Senate. There is a question mark in my mind as to what we did.
  
- Wai Mok: The provost has reviewed Chapter 1 through Chapter 6 and she is aware of this problem. And she is working on a revision of this issue—the inconsistency between 6.1 and Appendix B. She is working on it and will return the revision back to us, with her language of the correction, and we will look at it.

Do you want to take on this issue right now, or once she has given us her revision? She has finished her revision; it is currently at the legal office.

- Anne Marie Choup: To what extent would this bill fix the situation that rarely comes up, or is this a common scenario among departments?
- Wai Mok: It originated among a sticky situation.
- Peter Slater: The Physics Department removed a chair. If you read Appendix B carefully, it is about reappointment. But it is a more general problem. It happened in Math a few years ago.
- Carolyn Sanders: It seems to me that the provost is trying to align these two sections. So I suggest that we do not put our energy into this until after she has done this, because our real work begins once she has given this back to us to possibly work on.

James Swain calls the question of accepting the FSEC Report.

Ayes accept the motion to approve the February 5, 2015 FSEC Report

- Wai Mok: This issue will come back to us. Once it does, then we will open up the floor.
- Jeff Weimer: Do we have a sense of how much later "later" is?
- Wai Mok: She just told me that it is in the legal office.

➤ Kader Frendi **motions to adjourn**. Luciano Matzkin seconds the motion.

Faculty Senate Meeting #556 adjourned  
February 12, 2015, 2:05 P.M.